

highway history

Iowa recognizes the 50th anniversary of the interstate highway system. —By Nancy Richardson

The Iowa Department of Transportation has teamed up with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, and AAA to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, which created the more than 46,000-mile interstate highway system.

The commemorative activities planned for this year are aimed at raising the public's consciousness about the importance of the interstate to our mobility, economic vitality and security.

Often taken for granted, the interstate highway system profoundly altered American society by changing the way we move people and goods. It revolutionized the travel, tourism and recreation industries by spurring

a variety of new businesses, including convenience stores, fast-food restaurants, chain motels, truck stops and retail businesses.

The interstate also introduced motorists to the modernized rest area as well as visitor information and welcome centers. For those of us who can remember traveling before the interstate was constructed, we really appreciate the convenience of these services.

Among the many celebratory activities planned for this year is a national motor vehicle caravan, which will travel from San Francisco to Washington, D.C., in June. On June 23, the caravan will stop at Living History Farms in Urbandale, Iowa, and then at the I-80 Truck Stop in Walcott, Iowa.

You are invited to take part in the celebration in Urbandale where the grounds of Living History Farms will be rocking 'n' rolling to the music of Jerry Martin and The Sounds. Martin was the first musician to record a rock record in Iowa. In the spring of 1957, his band cut the record "Janet/Lovely One" at Fredlo Studios in Davenport.

Additional details about the '50s- and '60s-themed event, which will pay tribute to Iowa's early interstate road-building period, will be announced later this year on the Iowa Department of Transportation's special Web site, iowainterstate50th.com. ●

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